

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ILAB, PINT, MO
SUBJ: PHOSPHATE STRIKE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED

1. SUMMARY: A RECENT ONE-DAY STRIKE BY PHOSPHATE WORKERS WAS ORGANIZED BY SUPPORTERS OF A MILDLY LEFTIST POLITICAL OPPOSITION PARTY (USFP/UNION SOCIALISTE DES FORCES POPULAIRES). FUTURE STRIKES ARE POSSIBLE BUTY THEY ARE EXPECTED TO BE OF SHORT DURATION AND SHOULD NOT AFFECT PHOSPHATE PRODUCTION. THE PHOSPHATE WORKER STRIKE IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE WANING INFLUENCE OF MOROCCO'S PREDOMINANT TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION, UMT (UNION MAROCAINE DU TRAVAIL).
END SUMMARY.

2. THE 24-HOUR STRIKE AT THE KOURIBGA MINE AND THE 1-DAY WALKOUT IN THE PORT OF CASABLANCA BY EMPLOYEES OF THE NATIONAL PHOSPHATE OFFICER (OCP/OFFICE NATIONAL DES PHOSPHATES) ON MARCH 25 WAS ORGANIZED AND LED BY A UNION AFFILIATED WITH THE LEFTIST POLITICAL PARTY, USFP (UNION SOCIALISTE DES FORCES POPULAIRES) ACCORDING TO THE OCP DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL, AHMED FALAKI. HE CLAIMED THAT ABOUT 50 PERCENT OF THE MEMBERS OF THE OCP WORKER DELEGATE COMMITTEE,
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WHICH NEGOTIATES LABOR CONTRACTS WITH OCP, ARE SUPPORTERS OF THE USFP UNION AND THAT ABOUT THE SAME PERCENTAGE APPLIES TO WORKDERS AT THE MINE. FALAKI COMMENTED THAT THIS SHIFT IN FAVOR OF THE USFP TOOK PLACE AMONG MANY WORKER DELEGATES WHO ORIGINALLY RAN AS INDEPENDENT OR UNDECLARED CANDIDATES IN THE WORKER DELEGATE ELECTIONS IN 1976. (NOTE: ALL INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES WITH MORE THAN 10 EMPLOYEES

ARE REQUIRED TO HOLD WORKER DELEGATE ELECTIONS. WINNERS IN THIS ELECTION, NOT THE UNION, NEGOTIATE WITH MANAGEMENT. HOWEVER, WORKDER DELEGATES ARE USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PREDOMINANT UNION AT THE PLANT).

3. SEVERAL OF THE ISSUES BEHIND THE STRIKE ARE BING RESOLVED UNILATERALLY BY OCP MANAGEMENT (E.G. IMPROVEMENT OF THE PENSION RATES) WHILE OTHER DEMANDS ARE SIMPLY DEMANDS AND EXPANDED WORKDER HOUSING). HOWEVER, FALAKI SAID THAT THE REAL AIM OF THE RECENT STRIKE WAS TO IMPRESS THE OCP THAT THE USFP WAS THE STRONGEST UNION AMONG PHOSPHATE WORKDERS RATHER THAN THE MOROCCAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (UMT/UNION MAROCAINE DU TRAVAIL) WHICH HAS ORVGANIZED MOST OF THE COUNTRY'S INDUSTRIAL WORKERS BUT WHICH HAS BEEN LOSING GROUND TO USFP UNIONS IN SEVERAL SECTORS (PTT, NATIONAL TEA AND SUGAR OFFICE, SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, NATIONAL RAILWAY OFFICE-ONCF).

4. FALAKI BELIEVES THAT THE DEMANDS OF THE USFP UNION ARE TOO COSTLY TO BE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE GOVERNMENT. HE EXPECTS SEVERAL MORE STRIKES BUT HE DOUBTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL GIVE IN TO THE UNION DEMANDS AS THIS WOULD GIVE THE USFP UNION A PREDOMINANT ROLE IN LABOR RELATIONS IN MOROCCO'S KEY PHOSPHATE INDUSTRY. ASKED ABOUT THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE STRIKE, FALAKI SAID THAT PHOSPHATE PRODUCTION THIS MARCH HAD BEEN GREATER THAN MARCH 1977. HE DID NOT ANTICIPATE THAT FUTURE STRIKES WOULD HURT THE INDUSTRY.
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HE REITERATED WHAT MANY OTHERS OBSERVERS OF THE LABOR SCENE HERE CONCLUDED, THAT THE UMT IS STEADILY LOSING GROUND TO THE MORE DEMOCRATIC, DYNAMIC, AND MILITANT USFP UNIONS. MONJO

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